

FADE IN:

EXT. FOUNTAIN PARK - DAY

Sunset brims the skyline of Washington, D.C. Elegant lights line around the majestic water fountain.

A love-struck couple strides to the base of the fountain.

SONNY GREICO, a young Deaf gentleman, looks lovingly at ERICA SONG, a pretty, feisty Deaf woman. Both are in young 20's.

Sonny strokes her cheek. Her eyes looks up. He pulls her in and kiss her forehead softly.

Erica hugs him. He pulls a few of her hair strands down.

INT. METRO - NIGHT

The train flies by and then, halts to a stop. The doors fling open.

Sonny and Erica step in, securing their seats.

Sonny then looks at the Metro map, counting the stops.

Erica pulls at his shirt.

ERICA
Where are we going!?

SONNY
Somewhere wonderful, beautiful and most importantly, romantic.

ERICA
Come on! Tell me!

Sonny places his finger on his mouth.

SONNY
Shh.

She tucks her hands inside her armpits. Sonny glances back at the Metro map.

Erica drags him back to the seat. She massages his chest.

EXT. UNION STATION - NIGHT

They move up slowly on escalators.

They step out. A beggar comes up to them abruptly, scaring them a

little bit.

BEGGAR
Got some changes, mon?

Sonny waves him off fast and quick.

BEGGAR
(continuing)
Hey, I can hear those changes!
In your pockets!

Erica and Sonny pace away, ignoring the beggar.

BEGGAR's POV:

They walk away, their backs still to him.

BEGGAR
(continuing)
Jingling, clicking!

EXT. UNION STATION PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

SONNY
(murmuring to Erica)
Get a job!

The couple enters into Union Station.

INT. UNION STATION - NIGHT

Back to its restored glory, it now stands as a fine architecture piece of work.

They plod up a spiral stairway to a open-spaced Thailand restaurant perched on a floor above.

Bystanders walk briskly. A few sit on the bench reading the newspapers.

INT. SPICY THAI - NIGHT

The waitress nods and smiles at the incoming Deaf couple.

She leads the couple to a quiet and distant spot in the restaurant.

They sit under the softly lit table. Indeed a romantic spot.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT

Pitch black dark sky is smeared with bright lit skyline of political landscape. Busy traffic lights blink. Trains rumble. Bystanders wait outside front of the Union Station.

INT. SPICY THAI - NIGHT

Almost finished with their dinner, a few drops of wine in tall glasses, Sonny leans--

A body figure appears quickly. A young, handsome gentleman, JOSEPH ROMANSKI, with hallowed, but piercing eyes, quickly places a cute clear fish-shaped plastic enclosure with an orange plastic fish inside swimming in blue liquid on the table.

It is a key handle with a tag attached.

He exits quickly, carrying a small handbag.

Sonny and Erica freeze, snapping out of their romantic aura.

Sonny glances back at Joseph placing the same key handles on other tables. He turns to Erica.

SONNY

(looking at the tag)
Pity...pity. What good does it help? "Poor me, I am Deaf. Help me."

ERICA

"I can't survive in this mean, cruel world without your support."

ANGLE ON SONNY

Sorrowful facial expression.

ERICA

(continuing)
This is bullshit. Remember the story about the immigrant ring that got busted in New York City. Hearing Mexicans using Deaf to sell those pieces of shit in return of giving the Deaf Mexicans green cards.

A few patrons glance at the Deaf couple.

SONNY

Yeah. Remember I was in Los Angeles Airport. The same thing happened. When he came back, I signed to him. He froze, panicked.

(looking speechless)

"Shit, I am busted. Shit."
People around saw us.

ERICA

You yelled at him, right?

SONNY

Of course, it's wrong to get pity on us, the Deaf people.

ERICA

Well, we get SSI. Is that pity on us? Why not them?

SONNY

True, but walking around begging. No. That's different.

ERICA

Or working, busting their asses?

SONNY

The point is it's a disgrace to ask for pity. To ask for dollar signs for our disability is inexcusable.

ERICA

You're not better either. Back in college days, freeloading from taxpayers' money. Is it the same thing?

SONNY

No, we're ripping off the government.

ERICA

(cuts in)

Which is paid for by?
Taxpayers like you.

(pointing a finger)

5.

Wait

SONNY

Wait. The intentions are different. To beg for money is worse than checks direct deposited to our bank accounts.

SONNY

(continuing)

Me..Me. What about you, too?

ERICA

We abuse the system. To our advantage. ~~Well, it can be a~~
[Can be a disadvantage.]

SONNY

SSI is like a big time debt to all disabled people who suffered prejudices and discriminations in the past.

(Scene 3) Before Erica can react, Joseph comes picking up the plastic key handle.
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SONNY

(fast)

You Deaf?

JOSEPH

Yes, I'm Deaf.

He puts the plastic key handle away in his handbag. He peeks at them with care.

ERICA

It is not good to walk around and asking for pity.

Joseph gestures to them as to wait.

ERICA

(continuing)

You're better off going to college to get some education.

SONNY

You can't preach at him.

JOSEPH

(upset)

I know. I know. I am not American.

(BEAT)

If I can get a green card, I can work and attend the university.

SONNY

You don't need a green card to attend an university. Just a student visa will do.

ERICA

Right.

JOSEPH

It's hard. . .struggle for me. I have an engineering degree at Slovak. I am from Slovak.
. . .

SONNY

(interrupts)

Why are you here? Stay in your country and find a job.

JOSEPH

There are no jobs for me in Slovakia. I finished the university. I came out. There are no jobs for me. Deaf people wasted away, drinking beers. Economy's bad. No one will hire a Deaf person.

ERICA

Maybe you need to preserve.

JOSEPH

I'm starving. \$20 dollars per month from the government. I have no life. No life. Struggle. Struggle.

ERICA

You escaped to here?

JOSEPH

No, I got a visa. I have a friend who lives here. We are pen pals for long time. We wrote back and forth. I hoped for the best for us. She wanted me to visit her. She sent me some money. I saved some money. Waited for a year to get a visa.

More patrons notice the visual and signed conversation between Joseph and the Deaf couple.

JOSEPH

(continuing)

Finally, I arrived here. Beautiful. I looked at Deaf people. They have jobs and lives. Beautiful. I came to see my pen pal. I was surprised to see her with a baby. She never wrote to me about her baby.

ERICA

You live with her now?

JOSEPH

No. She lied to her mother. Her mother got mad at me. I am innocent. I love her. She threw me out. I have no place to live.

ERICA

Why?

JOSEPH

There's no room for me. The mother, my friend and her baby in a small apartment. Too small.

SONNY

Where do you live now?

JOSEPH

I live in one room. Shared with 4 foreginers. We helped pitch some money.

Sonny digs in his pockets and get some change. He puts the change in Joseph's handbag.

JOSEPH

No...no.
(surprised)
Thanks.

SONNY

Don't worry about it.

ERICA

How long have you been here?

JOSEPH

One year.

ERICA

Your visa expired?

JOSEPH

I can't go back. There's no
life for me in my country. I
want to stay here.

SONNY

Be careful. Watch out.

Joseph pauses and realizes something.

JOSEPH

I have to go collect those stuff.

Joseph leaves. Deaf couple is in silence.

Sonny drinks some water.

ERICA

I felt bad.

SONNY

We're lucky.

Joseph arrives.

JOSEPH

So long.

He pulls out the key handle.

JOSEPH
(continuing)
From me to you. Thank you.

SONNY
No. No.

JOSEPH
I insist.

He smiles with a bittersweet tone. He finally exits.

Sonny and Erica are silent. Patrons glimpse at them. The waitress looks after Joseph and glances back to the Deaf couple.

SONNY
Restroom.

INT. SPICY THAI'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sonny unzips and unloads the liquid waste into the urinal stand.

SONNY
(narrating)
It was hard for me here.
Turned down many times at job
interviews because I am Deaf.
Now, I am lucky to have a good
life.

(BEAT)
I ate good food. This guy.
It's always hard life in other
countries. Is it fair?
What's his name? Jeez!

(BEAT)
What's the matter with me?
He's Deaf. So am I.

INT. SPICY THAI - NIGHT

Sonny rushes back to the table.

SONNY
What's the matter with us? We
don't even know his first
name.

ERICA
Why? What's wrong?

SONNY

(looks around)

We have to find him. We
should give him a hot meal.
Look, he's Deaf like us. Will
it hurt to give him some food
and comfort?

Erica looks down at the bill. Sonny swipes the bill. Sonny gazes
at her.

Erica nods. Sonny stands still, uncertain.

ERICA

It's too late. He may be gone
by now.

SONNY

Let's go.

INT. SPICY THAI - NIGHT

Sonny paid the bill and pulls Erica's arm. They bolt out.
Patrons and waitress look after them.

EXT. UNION STATION - NIGHT

They run and open the door.

SONNY

You go that way. I'll go other way.

Both depart, looking for Joseph.

Sonny searches for him. A figure passes by. Not him. Where is
he?

Erica walks briskly. She looks down the escalators bringing
people up and down into the Metro Station.

No sight of him.

Sonny hops and then runs. He stops and looks out through the
restaurant's windows startling the spectators inside.

SONNY'S POV

People are eating their dinners. Some laugh, drinking wines. A
few stare back at him. No sight of Joseph.

Erica looks out at the open space besides Union Station. She
glances a few looks at spaces between tall columns.

ERICA's POV

Just people walk by. Bystanders wait. Taxi cabs fly by.

At the corner, Sonny looks out at the big green space. Joseph is not there.

Erica looks down at the escalators again. He's none to be seen.

Erica waits at the front entrance, looking out for Sonny.

Sonny appears, walking slowly to her.

Sonny shakes his head slowly.

Erica hugs him, holding his waist. Sonny rubs his cheekbone.

He takes the key handle out of his coat pocket. He jingles with it a little bit. He drops it back into his coat pocket.

Erica looks at him fondly.

Both head for home, away from the majestic Union Station.

FADE OUT: